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THE RELATION OF THE COLLEGES  
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TO THE NATIONAL CRISIS

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BUREAU OF EXTENSION,  
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of  
1917

# The Relation of the Colleges and Universities of the South to the National Crisis\*

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We have accustomed ourselves to think of our America as a new country and of our people as a youthful nation. We often speak of our government as the latest experiment in representative democracy and picture the other nations as watching with amused tolerance the play of the bubbles in our political crucible. Yet we have only to open our minds to the facts of human history to discover that the Government in Washington is the oldest government now existing on this earth, and that our political experiment offers to the world such guarantees of stability as are nowhere else to be discovered.

We think of ourselves also as a peace-loving folk and quote with deep earnestness and conviction Thomas Jefferson's phrase: "Peace is our passion; wrongs might drive us from it; but we prefer every other just principle before we would recur to war."

Yet during the one hundred and forty-one years which have elapsed since July 4th, 1776, we have fought five wars, coming off each time victorious. We have seen in all sixteen solid years of battle. The larger part of our national domain has come to us as spoil of war. The great axioms of our political life were forged in the fires of war. The revolutionary war established our Independence. The war of 1812 woke us to Nationality. The Mexican war brought to birth our consciousness of Sovereignty in the Western Hemisphere. The Civil war transformed the "more perfect" union of our forefathers into an Indissoluble Union and by the abolition of slavery demonstrated the genuine-

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\*An address delivered Wednesday, Oct. 14th, 1917, 8:30 P. M., before the Southern Commercial Congress in the North Ball Room of the Astor Hotel.

ness of America's "decent respect for the opinion of mankind." And last of all the Spanish-American war brought home to our national conscience the call of destiny and duty, teaching us that on this God-governed earth no nation liveth to itself and no nation dieth to itself,—that in our Christianized civilization the privileges of nationality and the obligations of nationality cannot be permanently divided. As each man is his brother's keeper, so each nation must share the guardianship of her sister nations.

Surely it does not lie in the mouth of any American to speak of wars as unmixed evils. It was through war that we were born into the great family of nations. It was in war that we learned the first lessons of collective effort and national energy. It was war which revealed to America her privilege of leadership and opened her eyes to her continental destiny. It was through war that the New South and the New North were united in perpetual amity. It was war and war alone which by its thunderbolts availed to split and scatter the only cloud which from the birth of this nation had darkened our political sky. And it was from war's fierce tumult that the still, small voice of duty spoke calling us to world-wide service in the cause of human freedom. I am no eulogist of war, no apologist for its evils; my childhood knew them in all their bitterness, in all their terror. I am glad and grateful that we have never lifted the gage of battle, save when long endurance of wrongs had made a mockery of repeated efforts for amendment. But I should be blind to the light of truth and deaf to the voice of reason if I did not see that under the guidance of Heaven wars had given to this country its chief national virtues—unity of spirit, concentration of power, a nobler patriotism, a truer political ideal, and a loftier political purpose.

In the great conflict which some of us still remember the South learned its most lasting and exalted lessons. Men learned to give without stinting—to the last dollar, to the last horse, to the last bushel of corn, to the last pound of meat. Mothers were taught that their country was more sacred and more precious than their sons. Wives staunched their tears whilst they buckled on their husbands' sabres and cheered them on the march. Girls sent their lovers into the storm of battle with kisses still sweet upon

their lips. Timid women, left unguarded on the broad Southern plantations, learned to be brave and strong, to do a man's work, to fulfil a man's duties. Soldiers learned to face danger, to smile wounds, to jest at weariness, to scoff at death. The graduates of that fierce curriculum of four blood-stained years came back to rebuild the desolated homes, to plough again the devastated fields. These were the men—not their sons or their grandsons—who created the New South and wrested from ruin a truer and a greater prosperity. With no indemnities, with no foreign aid, despite political oppression, despite unjust taxation, they rebuilt their homes, restocked their farms, organized governments, created social order, established schools, erected their churches, and made over into nobler and finer forms the shattered civilization of their Golden Age. We bare our heads to the soldiers who marched with Jackson and rode with Stuart and fought with Lee. As one of their own number has said of them:

"They could cherish honour, they could cherish principle, they could cherish love; but they could not cherish hate."

Such was their spirit, such their work in those far-off days. And so the spirit of these vanquished men is today victorious. It was the spirit of their immortal leader; the spirit which created the New South; the spirit which animates this Southern Commercial Congress; the spirit which has seated in the White House that great Southern president upon whom the hopes of this war-torn world today depend.

With greater wealth and greater power we are facing now a greater war. Again there comes to America the oldest government on earth, the most stable, the most peace-loving, the call for supreme sacrifice, for supreme devotion. As in the American Civil War, so in this vast World War, there are deep-lying political problems which press for final solution. A new doctrine of National Sovereignty, stripped of all the moral sanctions of civilization, is locked in deadly grapple with the concepts of national good faith and national honour. The fight again must be to a finish. Compromise would spell defeat. Germany, unscrupulous and unconquered, would be the deadliest foe of human civilization. Once more America has pledged to the cause of righteousness life and fortune. Once more she must be pre-

pared to give unstintingly—to the last dollar, the last man, the last horse, the last ship, the last gun. The call is nation-wide and colleges and universities are summoned to do their part. We ask today what they have done, what they are doing, what in the future they will do to make this world safe for democracy.

If I speak for the University, with which I have the honour to be connected, it is because I know her story best and not because other schools have done less or given less. Of the 9,000 living alumni and students of the University of Virginia, 1,800 or twenty per cent. are in active service for the nation, as against six per cent of our total national man-power. When war was declared 800 out of a thousand resident students entered at once on a vigorous course of military training, and of these 200 were sent forward by the Commandant at the end of the session to the various Reserve Officers' Training Camps. Since that time we have given two units of forty-five men each to the Allentown Camp and have organized Base Hospital Unit, No. 41, capable of handling a military hospital of 1,000 beds. Our contribution in undergraduates to the National Army and the related industrial services of the country may be estimated from the fact that in place of our usual annual growth of five to ten per cent. we have this year a loss in attendance of about thirty per cent. Our medical undergraduates by a ruling of the War Department have been permitted to continue their studies, subject to the obligation of reporting for public service as soon as they win their degrees. Unfortunately the same wise foresight has not prevailed as to the students of engineering; our graduating class has been decimated by the draft law and the attendance has been maintained only because of a large influx of Freshmen students of engineering. The Chief of Engineers of the United States Army declared recently in a public address before an audience of engineers:

"It is a mistake for a trained man to go into the ranks with a musket. It is a waste of good material. How many of us will be needed we do not know, but do not let us waste this wonderful material that we have by putting a man, who is fitted to be a leader of men, fitted to do high service, to the performing of a service which does not require education or training, with the probability of his complete loss to the country."



The Secretary of War has expressed himself to the same effect. The Superintendent of the United States Military Academy urges that young men finish their course of study in Engineering. Yet despite this consensus of expert opinion the administrative chiefs of the War Department continue to drain away from the Engineering Schools their best material before the training is complete. They take this material not for engineering service, but for the trenches. Even if for the present they have more engineers than they require they should take some heed of the needs of the army and the country in the not distant future.

Let us turn next to the question of the work of the colleges and universities today. Once more I take my own university as a sample, because, as far as I know, all the schools are pursuing the same aims and employing the same methods. Military training is continued. We are fortunate in having the services of an accomplished West-Pointer for this work and the drill and the lectures on military science go briskly on. Under our elective system it has been thought best not to require the military course for all students; but in the School of Engineering we have devised a plan which works just as well. We have incorporated this course into the requirements for all degrees; and the student who does not take it must offer instead two additional courses of technical study as an equivalent. The result is that all the Engineering students are in Colonel Cole's battalion.

In addition to the military training we have introduced a large number of other courses more or less closely related to the war work. As examples I may mention intensive courses in French, German, and Spanish, so taught as to give a working knowledge of these languages for actual speaking and writing. They are conducted somewhat on the plan of the laboratory courses in a science, following the rule of Aristotle, which teaches that "the best way to learn anything well, which has to be done after it is learned, is always to be a-doing while we are a-learning." These courses exact more effort and require more time than the parallel literary courses in the same languages and are given therefore a larger measure of academic credit.

Of another type, but organized to meet the same demand, are

courses in telegraphy, telephony, wireless, signalling, and photography. These also are taught so as to secure practical values as well as scientific understanding. All that is fundamentally necessary in the sciences of light, heat, magnetism, and electricity is thoroughly given. But the student does not stop here; he goes on to practical essays of his own power and is required to attain a specified standard of expert knowledge.

In a third group fall the new courses offered in the political geography of all the great European states, in meteorology, in physical geography, and in international law and diplomacy. From the School of Engineering have been taken over courses in plane surveying, topographical surveying, topographical drawing, map-making, navigation, field astronomy, automobile construction and care, and the characteristics and uses of timber. In each course the intensive method is followed and abundant practical exercises serve to consolidate the student's knowledge. All have one aim—the preparation of young Americans for skilful and intelligent patriotic service.

Most interesting of all present-day speculations in every department of human thought are those which deal with the conduct of life after the war. Teachers like other men are asking themselves what is going to happen. Some are bold enough to assume the prophetic mantle and specify a programme of coming educational reforms. My aim must be more modest and confine itself to a brief consideration of such present educational movements as seem likely to project their influence into the future. One sure anchor must hold in all such speculations. The curriculum of the colleges represents the slowly accumulated thought and judgment of civilized mankind on the topics which are of most worth to the human race. Five hundred years have been spent on its development and the meditation and wisdom of long generations of deep-thinking men. It is a living organism, not a dead aggregate, and grows from more to more as human science expands its realm. It has survived wars, revolutions, and reformations, and in its great outlines has remained the same. We should be foolish therefore to look for any sudden upheaval which would shatter this curriculum and remold its fragments into novel forms. As in the past, so in the future it will con-

tinue to grow, to adapt itself to humanity's expanding thought and widening needs, to throw out new shoots, to discard dead branches; but after the war the body of human science must remain on the whole what it was before the war, and teachers must expound the old learning, although with a new spirit and to a new world.

If we ask what will be the manifestation of that new spirit, under what form it will come, I can best express my thought by asking you to reflect for a little on an old-fashioned phrase—*colleges of the arts and sciences*. It is a mere phrase now and we use it as a formula, careless of its meaning. What did it mean when it first passed current as fresh coin from the mint of speech? In that day *Scientia* meant not natural science alone nor physical science, but any coherent body of organized knowledge. To each science there was an art, a body of expert learning, founded on that science and culminating in some worthy human utility. Grammar was a science in those days—Latin Grammar—and grammar culminated in the art of reading, writing and speaking the Latin tongue. Rhetoric was a science and on it was founded the art of Oratory, useful alike to priest and politician, general and king. Out of every science deemed worthy of admission to the curriculum grew some useful art; and beneath every art engaging a scholar's attention must lie some science, some coherent body of organized knowledge. A master of arts was one who was versed in the sciences of both Trivium and Quadrivium and was expert also in the arts founded upon them.

The new world for which we are looking will be like that old world of the Revival of Learning, torn and tormented by war. To make the world over men will need not only the abstract sciences now taught in our universities but also the useful arts which rest upon them and grow out of them. I believe that the educational reform of the new world will discard from the curriculum of our colleges and universities every science, which is not the foundation of some useful art, and will bring into the curriculum every useful art whose foundation is a coherent body of organized knowledge.


In this great overturn the dead must go; the living must re-

main. There are two languages in all our universities which are called the dead languages. They are really dead; their professors have killed them. But locked up in these dark caskets are some of the most vital treasures of humanity—the splendid music of Virgil, the tragic force of Sophocles, the historic vision of Thucydides, the serene wisdom of Plato, the pregnant eloquence of Cicero, the wholesome wit of Horace. Such things are immortal; they cannot be killed, they will never die. Prisoned in the caskets of formal scholarship they are hidden away and the student's eye and ear and heart watch and listen and long for them in vain. One business of the new education will be to raise these living treasures from the dead; for humanity will not, cannot let them go. They are like the great gods of the ancient world; even their graven images could breathe divine oracles into the listening ear of the waiting worshipper.

Even so when that new world comes I look to see in our universities not a new body of learning, but a new spirit in the old beautiful body. I look to see not only the dead languages cast into the discard but the dead philosophies and the dead histories and the dead literatures and the dead sciences. As the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, so human learning is made for man and not man for learning. That Science which has no voice for the mind and the heart of humanity is of little worth. That Science which culminates in no useful human art will have no place in the curriculum of the new world.

It seems a safe estimate to say that in the armies of America are enlisted more than 60,000 young collegians. Many of these will come back no more; but when the war is ended many more will seek again their college homes. It is these men, who will bring with them the new purpose and the new spirit. They will know what it is to stand face to face with death and never quiver. They will know life and its grim drafts upon human energy and human courage. They will demand the realities of scholarship, not the shams of learning. It is for these men that all American universities should put their houses in order.



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